# **Feedback**

## From the Editor

THE 2nd Infantry Division takes center stage in this month's issue, with stories from former Soldiers staffer MSG John Brenci and his public affairs staff at Camp Red Cloud, Korea. The division continues to stand ready to respond to aggression at literally a moment's notice.

Also in this issue are several stories from Heike Hasenauer that take a look at Berlin today. It's an understatement to say how much Berlin has changed since the Wall came down. Soldiers who travel there now see a thriving and exciting city just now retaking its place among the great cities of the world.

I hope you enjoy reading about these and the myriad other places around the world where American soldiers serve the nation and the causes of peace and freedom. This is my last full issue as editor in chief of Soldiers, as I am departing for new challenges and opportunities. It has been my privilege and my distinct honor to help bring vou useful and usable information about our Army. It is and will remain my greatest thrill to have the title of soldier and wear a shirt that says, "U.S. ARMY."

fay Historiades

### **Deadbeat Dads**

WHILE Heike Hasenauer's September article "Cracking Down On Deadbeat Dads" properly addresses a very important issue, I must complain about the title. It is not only Dads who fall in this category. The percentage of custodial fathers is small, as the article stated, but it is growing as courts award custody to fathers in increasing numbers.

I was a noncustodial parent who faithfully paid child support for 10 years, like the vast majority of parents in these situations who meet their obligations. Nothing ever gets said about them regardless of gender. It's the "Deadbeat Dads" that get the press. Let's hear something about the games ex-wives play. One particularly good one that I have personally experienced follows.

Mv ex-wife was well aware that while I was on active duty I received a COLA raise every January. Rather than enter into an agreement that would automatically increase child support, she preferred to issue a subpoena through the court that required my presence in North Carolina, regardless of where I might be stationed at the time. This happened for eight straight years - even after the court told her to stop it. She got particularly good at timing the subpoena so that it would be served on Feb. 14 every year - my wedding anniversary to my second wife. As you can imagine. this ruined several romantic plans. I suppose what I am asking for is a little balance to the story by saying what some of us better Dads (note I didn't say "good" Dads) have done to meet our obligations. That recognition would be nice.

> LTC Hank Hanrahan (Ret.) Fort A.P. Hill, Va.

## **Identity Thieves**

I READ with interest the identity theft article in the September issue. One of the echoing watch phrases in all articles on this subject is "guard your social security number." This is good advice. However, as many of us know, this is next to impossible in the service. While the use of the SSN as a means of identification by the military will undoubtedly continue, there are things that can be done.

Military exchanges still require customers to place their SSNs on the fronts of personal checks. This places service members at further risk for identity theft and is unnecessary. Many civilian businesses run checks through automatic check scanners to "approve" even out-of-state checks. Why can't AAFES adopt these check scanners for use in its commercial outlets? Perhaps it will take another article in **Soldiers** about the theft of service-member identities.

MAJ Eric G. Wahlgren Fort Wainwright, Alaska

IREAD your September article "Beware the Identity Thieves" and couldn't help but notice that social security number protection is bulleted first on your list of safeguarding items. It's ironic that the commissary and exchange systems refuse to stop what I consider an illegal practice of requiring everyone to put their SSNs on checks.

The truth is that they are the only business that requires an SSN on a check — other businesses validate checks with driver's license numbers through Telecheck and similar companies. The commissary and PX have forced us to reduce our shopping to cash only, simply to avoid having to divulge our SSNs. I wonder why the Army continues to let AAFES and the commissary system get away with making soldiers violate the Social Security Number Privacy Act in a time when identity theft is at an all-time high.

MAJ Rodney F. Walden via e-mail

WHEN I picked up the September issue of **Soldiers** and looked at the table of contents, I almost threw it away. I don't mean to come down on the magazine, but I am sick and tired of seeing references to just deadbeat "dads." I have been divorced for more than two years and have custody of my two children. My ex-wife is so far behind on child support that

it isn't even funny. Is anyone calling her a deadbeat mom? If I were as far behind as she is, I would be in jail.

While I know that laws differ from state to state, in Minnesota if you don't pay for three straight months they take your driver's license away. I didn't receive a payment from June to September, but nothing has happened yet. I don't blame the

magazine, but I wish someone would realize that fathers do get custody of their kids, and there is such a thing as "Deadbeat Moms."

SPC Joshua D. Balmer via e-mail

Although very insightful, your September article fails to discuss the "Deadbeat Mom." I am one of the 1 percent of dads who are the victims of an ex-spouse who has never paid a dime of child support. I had to make holidays, Mother's Day and my ex-spouse's birthdays special for my kids — at my own expense. Little do people realize that, although 99 percent of the "deadbeats" may be male, there is that 1 percent that is female. My hat's off to the dads who took the responsibility to make their children's lives a little better place to be.

> MAJ Todd Nicolson Scott Air Force Base, III.

YOUR September article insinuated that "fathers" are always the bad guys in paternity suits and child-support situations. I expected you to give it a perspective of non-gender bias, to more so address the problem.

I wish to make two points: first, that it is wrong to attach any gender specifics to this topic. Second, that after reading your article I was left feeling that if I wasn't supporting my children, then it would be okay for me to decide when to start doing so.

A more proper title could have been "Cracking Down on Deadbeat Parents." It removes the gender issue and truly relates to the problem at hand.

I realize that the majority of those "deadbeat parents" are male, but there is a fast-growing minority that is female. Apart from my personal first-hand

experience with a "deadbeat mom" with my own children, the entire concept and problem are both situation-based and specific to the needs of the children. What I'm trying to say is that your article focused on man versus woman, and money, instead of on the children who need it. Your article only carries an air of financial deprivation for the mother of the child(ren), until the final sentence that reads: "What could be more important than providing the best possible quality of life for your child?"

I strongly believe that a clarification needs be given. Let's help the rest of the world realize that it's not what you are, but who you are. Your kids need you. Your support (both financial and emotional) is what makes life just a little (or a lot) easier to bear some days. Just sign me as "Mr. Mom."

MSG Ronald Brown Fort McCoy, Wis.

WE did not intend to slight anyone in the September article, and we're sorry that any readers took offense. But the fact remains that, according to statistics from the Pentagon JAG office that handles these complaints, "roughly 90 percent of nonsupport cases and alleged nonsupport cases are against men."

#### **Guard Omissions**

IT is frustrating to see glaring omissions concerning the National Guard. In your May edition, you are lavish with the display of unit insignia from all active-Army divisions in the Korean War, but seem to have conveniently forgotten the two National Guard divisions (40th and 45th Infantry divisions) that provided 25 percent of the fighting ground divisions in the force. If one reads the text or the time lines in your article you would never know that either division was ever in the war.

LTC David M. Eiedler, NJARNG (Ret.) Fort Monmouth. N.J.

AS a Korean War veteran of service in the 45th Infantry Division, I was very disappointed to see the glaring omission of both National Guard divisions, the 40th and the 45th, from your May coverage of "The Forgot-

ten War." I hope PFC Charles George, a Medal of Honor recipient killed in action, and others who gave their lives there are not turning over in their graves.

James R. Fritz Sr. Allentown, Pa.

#### **Poster Models**

CAN you please send me information on how I can apply to be a model on the annual **Soldiers** poster?

SFC Desiree L. Gadson Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii

Unfortunately, due to travel fund constraints, **Soldiers** magazine will be using only local soldiers as models this year.

Soldiers is for soldiers and DA civilians. We invite readers' views. Stay under 150 words — a post card will do — and include your name, rank and address. We'll withhold your name if you desire and may condense your views because of space. We can't publish or answer every one, but we'll use representative views. Write to: Feedback, Soldiers, 9325 Gunston Road, Ste. S108, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-5581, or e-mail: soldiers@belvoir.army.mil.

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